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IN THIS ISSUE:

We are pleased to have Dr. Sandra Stith from Virginia Tech University as our contributing author. She provides an overview of issues that relate to violence by single soldiers. She addresses violence in dating, cohabiting, and marital relationships. Additionally, Dr. Stith's article also covers various aspects of violence prevention in terms of community education, school-based prevention, and relationship enhancement programs.

To augment Dr. Stith's article, we have included a brief description of ongoing programs for single soldiers at Fort Hood and Fort Campbell. We are grateful for the assistance of 1LT Goodall at Fort Hood and CPT Hassinger at Fort Campbell in the preparation of the information about their respective installations.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE SINGLE SOLDIER

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The Army has an increasing interest in the causes and effects of violence. While all forms of relationship violence are not currently under the purview of the Army Family Advocacy Program

(FAP), the Army often contends with at least three forms of relationship violence: dating, cohabiting, and marital. At the present time, only marital violence is recognized by Army Regulation 608-18 as a legitimate area of intervention by the FAP.

In 1996, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 40% of all adults over the age of 18 were single. In contrast, approximately 45% of all active duty Army personnel are unmarried. When these unmarried soldiers are victims or offenders of non-marital partner violence, such incidents are not counted in official DOD statistics. The service member is eligible for services through FAP. Generally, the partner is not eligible for services unless he or she is already a beneficiary and registered in the DEERS database. Research about violence in dating or cohabiting relationships involving single soldiers is quite limited.

Rates of partner violence are dramatically higher for young adults than for other age groups. Therefore, FAP must pay attention to marital and non-marital relationships that are typical of this age group. Single soldiers are more likely to be younger and of a lower rank than are married soldiers. In fact, while about 30% of all Army officers are single, about 48% of all enlisted personnel are single. In this paper, I discuss risk factors for violence in dating and cohabiting

relationships, the impact of premarital violence on subsequent marriage, and programs to prevent relationship violence.

Dating Violence

A growing body of non-military research indicates that dating violence is as extensive as marital violence. In sharp contrast to the image of dating as a time of intimate sharing and romance, dating is often a time when emotional outbursts of anger and jealousy lead to physical aggression. As was clearly described by Dr. O'Leary in the April 1999 issue of "Joining Forces," physical aggression declines across the age span. Studies conducted on college campuses have reported that 21 to 53% of all dating couples have had

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at least one aggressive incident in the past year (Merrill, Hervig, Milner, Newell, & Koss, 1998). Similarly, 50% of a sample of 1,980 Navy basic trainees reported receiving or inflicting intimate partner violence (Merrill et al., 1998). Women reported both receiving and inflicting physical violence more frequently than men did; however, women (42%) who received violence were three times more often than men (14%) to report physical injury. Societal norms, which indicate that slapping or shoving are acceptable responses to conflict in dating relationships, make dating violence a common occurrence. Other risk factors for dating violence include exposure to

violence in the home, parental divorce, and contextual factors such as stress, jealousy, alcohol and other drug use (Kaufman Kantor & Jasinski, 1998).

Violence in Cohabiting Relationships

Cohabiting couples are at a greater risk of both nonlethal and lethal violence than are dating or married couples. In 1996, about 4 million unmarried couples lived together, eight times as many as in 1970. The Census Bureau reports that cohabiting is most popular in the 24-35 age group, with 1.6 million couples cohabiting. The next highest number of couples (931,000) are in the under-25 age group. While only 13% of marriage license applicants in 1970 in one county in Oregon were living together, 53% of these applicants were cohabiting in 1980 (Gwartney-Gibbs, 1986). Many couples view living together as a step in the progression from single to married. However, there are clear differences between marital and cohabiting relationships in a variety of areas including level of commitment and resources available to support the relationship. Therefore, violence in cohabiting relationships needs to be considered as distinct from dating and marital violence.

Comparing Dating, Cohabiting, and Marital

Characteristics that are found to be more common among cohabiting couples than married couples and are associated with a higher risk of violence include: youth, lower income, lower occupation level, and more problems with alcohol (Dawson &

Gartner, 1998). Factors which place cohabitators at greater risk for domestic violence than daters include higher rates of delinquent behavior in adolescence, lower levels of education, higher levels of stress, more areas of conflict, higher levels of social isolation, and lower levels of conventional attitudes (Magdol, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998).

A number of studies have found that partners in serious, longer term, and emotionally intense relationships are more likely to use violence to resolve conflicts, than are partners in less intense relationships. Individuals in violent dating relationships were more likely to use confrontation and insults as negotiation strategies and less likely to seek social support than were individuals in nonviolent relationships (Bird, Stith, & Schladale, 1991). In a more recent study, (Rosen, Bartle-Haring, & Stith, in press) we found that couple differentiation (ability to tolerate fluctuations in closeness and distance) was an important predictor of a violent dating relationship. That is, couples who were more enmeshed (less differentiated) were more likely to use violence in their relationships.

Stets and Straus (1989) compared the violence occurring in dating, cohabiting, and married couples and found that, even after controlling for age, education, and occupation, cohabiting couples were more likely to have experienced violence than dating or married couples. In addition, the most dangerous forms of violence occur when individuals

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cohabit. Situations in which both partners are violent are common in all three groups (9% of dating couples, 18% of cohabiting couples, and 7% of married couples). Female-only violence was least common in marital relationships (4%), compared with dating couples (7%) and cohabiting couples (8%). Male-only violence was least common in dating relationships (1%) and more common in cohabiting (6%) and married relationships (4%).

Married couples engage in less abuse than cohabiting couples. However, married couples tend to be older than cohabiting couples. When age is controlled, the differences in relationship violence appear much smaller. Thus, the distinction between cohabitation and marriage may be less salient for younger couples. As cohabitation becomes a more normal part of the life cycle, differences between cohabiting couples and dating couples, such as conventional attitudes and rates of delinquent behavior in adolescence, may not continue to exist. However, regardless of methodology, a series of studies conclude that cohabitators engage in more violence than married persons. Therefore, cohabitators represent a rapidly expanding category of couples that, in absolute terms, contains many potential victims of domestic violence.

Impact of Premarital Violence on Subsequent Marriage

Preventing premarital violence is likely to prevent or reduce marital violence. The single

soldier's premarital relationships may well represent intimate environments in which partners rehearse future marital roles. A violent dating relationship may establish the rules for a subsequent marriage – if he is outrageous, she may slap; if she does not do what he asks her to do, he may hit. Consequently, episodes of premarital violence can influence later incidents of marital violence. Because dating violence tends to involve less serious physical injury than does marital violence, it is often dismissed as unimportant. However, relationship violence often begins in early adolescence and may continue into marital relationships if undetected and left untreated. For example, O'Leary and colleagues (1989) in their longitudinal study of early marriage, found that if men engaged in physical aggression at premarriage, 51% of them engaged in physical aggression in the period between the sixth and the eighth month. If men were physically aggressive both at premarriage and the 6-18 month period, 59% of them were physically aggressive during the 18-30 month period. In contrast, if men had not engaged in physical aggression during premarriage nor during the 6 – 18 month period, 90% of them were not physically aggressive against their partner in the 18-30 month period.

Violence Prevention

Domestic violence prevention efforts need to begin early. If young couples are able to resolve conflict without violence before they marry, they are less likely to use violence after marriage, decreasing the number of children

exposed to parental violence. Implementing effective prevention strategies could prevent young couples and their children from experiencing the negative consequences of a violent family environment. Research on the effectiveness of domestic violence prevention programs is scant and generally contains many methodological flaws. However, there is some preliminary support for the effectiveness of community education efforts, school-based prevention programs, and relationship enhancement programs.

Community Education

Media campaigns have targeted domestic violence. For example, the Family Violence Prevention Fund launched a national public education campaign in 1994, called "There's no excuse for domestic violence" (Klein, Campbell, Soler, & Ghez, 1997). This campaign focused on extremely violent behavior. In heavily exposed areas, the percentage of respondents who said that they had taken action against domestic violence increased by 12 percentage points to 26% between July 1994 and November 1995. While media campaigns have generally targeted severe violence, cultural norms regarding the acceptability of milder forms of violence have also changed. Straus (1995) examined cultural norms using data from national surveys conducted in 1968, 1985, 1992, and 1994. Each of these surveys asked, "Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would

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approve of a husband slapping his wife's face?" and "Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a wife slapping her husband's face?" The percentage that approve of a husband slapping his wife's face decreased steadily from just over 20% in 1968 to half that rate in 1994. However, the percent that approve of a wife slapping her husband's face remained almost identical over the 26 years. Community education efforts have targeted male-to-female violence, but have not sent the message that any violence among intimates is unacceptable.

Community education campaigns to prevent violence in dating relationships can increase awareness of the preconditions that dispose people to violence, the prevalence of dating violence, how violence can escalate as relationships progress from casual to serious and how behavior in one relationship tends to influence behavior in the next relationship. Single soldiers could be made more aware of potential consequences of both male and female initiated violence.

School-based Prevention Programs

A variety of programs have been developed to educate teens about violent behavior in the hopes that they will not become perpetrators or victims of intimate violence. Most of these programs have several elements in common: (a) dispelling myths about violence; (b) examining societal messages about gender roles, power, and violence; and (c)

teaching skills to prevent violence (Hamby, 1998). While these programs have not been rigorously evaluated, there is some preliminary evidence for the potential benefits of these programs. For example, one study tested the effects of a six-session prevention program on attitudes toward violence on students. Significant decreases in overall attitudes justifying the use of dating violence as a means to resolve conflict were found among students exposed to the curriculum material, whereas those who were not exposed did not show attitude changes (Avery-Leaf, Cascardi, O'Leary, & Cano, 1997). Unfortunately, no studies have been conducted to demonstrate whether these programs lead to changes in violent behavior.

Relationship Enhancement Programs

Psychological aggression and destructive arguing generally precede physical aggression. Therefore, teaching communication and conflict resolution skills early in a relationship may help prevent future violence. Premarital and marital relationship enhancement programs teach such skills as active listening, expressive speaking, and problem solving. Only one longitudinal study has examined the impact of a relationship enhancement program on future domestic violence (Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993). In this study, they compared couples who participated in the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) with a control group. They found that couples

receiving the intervention had lower rates of violence than couples who did not receive the intervention; however, there was no pre-test so it was not possible to know if differences existed between groups before the intervention. In any event, since physical aggression in the absence of an argument is rare, efforts to improve communication and conflict resolution skills in nonviolent couples have the potential to stop the cycle of violence.

Summary

Domestic violence tends to occur early in relationships. Single soldiers are at risk for becoming domestic violence victims or offenders. The single soldier who is able to negotiate conflict in dating relationships without violence is more likely to become a nonviolent husband or wife. Efforts should be made to develop and evaluate prevention programs targeted to the needs of single soldiers.

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FORT HOOD'S SINGLE SOLDIER ABUSE PILOT PROGRAM

This program was developed after the involvement of a single soldier in a fatal incident of abuse against his fiancée at another installation. After that incident, the Department of Social Work at Fort Hood began the program in response to referrals involving abusive behaviors by the single soldier population and the lack of mechanisms to assist single soldiers involved in abusive domestic / intimate relationships.

A primary purpose of the program is to collect demographic data on individuals who, in the absence of a marital relationship, are involved in reported incidents

of abuse. The required criteria for inclusion in this program are:

- a. The couples involved, although not married to each other, must have an ongoing relationship at the time during which the incident occurred.
- b. Either one or both of the individuals involved in the incident must be an active duty soldier.

In addition to the general policy at Fort Hood that domestic violence in the military is unacceptable, it is also asserted that a romantic relationship does not give a person the right to abuse another. Accordingly, such physical violence often requires the unwarranted diversion and expenditure of scarce emergency medical resources.

Fort Hood has established the following procedures for the management of cases involving single soldiers:

- Victims, including children, are removed from potential harm.
- A history is taken to ascertain 1) whether the couple is actively involved with the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) and 2) a history of previous incidents of abuse between the victim, current, and past partners.
- Referrals are made to available community resources, if indicated and counseling is provided to support victims.

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- Command and law enforcement authorities are notified and an out-patient social work record is established.
- Following reports to both Social Work Service Family Advocacy and Outpatient Sections, the case is presented to the Family Advocacy Case Review Committee (CRC).
- If the CRC determines that treatment is warranted, treatment recommendations are mandated for the soldier. The soldier's commander is present at the CRC and made aware of the treatment recommendations.
- The Department of Social Work offers single soldiers the same therapeutic services that are offered to married couples who are FAP clients. However, substantiated cases are not sent to the Army Central Registry. A Command Policy Memorandum supports the Single Soldier Pilot Program at Fort Hood. From October 1998 through March 2000, a total of 78 single soldier abuse cases have been referred to the program.

A point of contact for Fort Hood's Single Soldier Pilot Program is 1LT Claudia N. Goodall, MSW, who can be reached at 254-288-6474 ext 238, DSN 738-6474 or email Claudia.Goodall@AMEDD.ARMY.MIL

FORT CAMPBELL'S SINGLE SOLDIER PROGRAM

The Single Soldier Program at Fort Campbell was created in 1998 to provide case management and treatment services for soldiers involved in incidents of domestic violence or assault against someone other than a spouse or a child. Case management is provided at the Community Mental Health Service. The Family Advocacy Program is responsible for the treatment portion of the program.

Since its inception, forty-three soldiers have been enrolled in the program. Program statistics indicate that a small percentage of soldiers have re-offended during or after their involvement with the program.

Soldiers in the Single Soldier Program are not staffed through the Family Advocacy Case Review Committee or any other administrative activity. However, an initiative is in process to increase commanders' awareness and endorsement of the program. Providing timely and effective assessment and treatment for soldiers who commit acts of violence is a priority at Fort Campbell. Accordingly, commanders have been very responsive to and supportive of the Single Soldier Program as it continues to be developed.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK FORCE

A congressionally mandated task force on domestic violence has been established by the Secretary of Defense. A purpose of the task force is to assess current domestic violence programs and policies within the Department of Defense (DoD) and the military services. The task force is comprised of members of the DoD, Justice, Health and Human Services, and subject matter experts from the private sector.

Members of the task force are charged with formulating a long-term, strategic plan that will assist the DoD in eliminating domestic violence within the Department. They will submit annual reports to the Secretary of Defense on their actions and the activities of the military departments to respond to domestic violence.

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